



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 14, 2005

News Release

ICE LAUNCHES OPERATION COMMUNITY SHIELD, 103 ARRESTS OF GANG MEMBERS IN SIX MAJOR U.S. CITIES *10 MS-13 Members Arrested in Miami as part of New National Crackdown*

MIAMI – A 28-year-old citizen of El Salvador charged with armed robbery, kidnapping and assault is among the ten members of the violent street gang “Mara Salvatrucha” (MS- 13) arrested here under a new nationwide anti-gang initiative led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Nationwide, enforcement actions under “Operation Community Shield” have netted 103 arrests, with roughly half of those having past arrests or convictions for violent criminal behavior. ICE officials announced the launch of Operation Community Shield along with these results today in a Washington, D.C., press conference.

Late last month, teams of ICE agents working with their federal, state, and local counterparts in the Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, Newark, Los Angeles, and Miami metropolitan areas, began arresting MS-13 gang members on a range of criminal and /or administrative charges. One arrest was also made in the Dallas metro area.

The 103 individuals arrested to date are accused of, or have already been convicted for, a wide variety of crimes that include murder, attempted murder, sodomy, assault, narcotics violations, weapons possession, re-entering the United States after deportation, and being in the United States illegally.

“The arrests of these violent gang members is indicative of ICE’s commitment to keeping the community we live in safe,” said Jesus Torres, special agent-in-charge of ICE Investigations in Miami. “ICE agents will continue to disrupt and dismantle this criminal element.”

The ten MS-13 gang members arrested in Miami are all amenable to removal by virtue of their criminal convictions. All are currently in ICE custody awaiting the outcome of their cases.

Operation Community Shield is a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative designed to disrupt and dismantle violent street gang organizations by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available to

ICE. Under this initiative, ICE is employing its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities to narcotics smuggling, shut down money laundering operations, and seek the forfeiture of assets.

This initiative also involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. In Miami, ICE has partnered with the Miami-Dade Police Department and the City of Miami Police Department.

ICE will also be working through its 54 International Attaché offices in other countries to cooperate with foreign governments that are also experiencing gang problems, particularly in Central America.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield is MS-13, a gang which originated in El Salvador and which is now one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States. Many MS-13 members are foreign nationals in this country illegally, making them subject to ICE's criminal and administrative immigration authorities. ICE plans to use these immigration tools to arrest, prosecute, and where appropriate, remove these individuals from the United States. ICE coordinates all deportations with the foreign nations receiving these individuals.

At the same time, many MS-13 members derive income from the sale of illegal drugs and other contraband, making them subject to ICE's counter-drug, financial, and other investigative authorities. Seizure and forfeiture of funds, property, and other illegally-derived assets will be another component of the initiative.

Operation Community Shield is an intelligence-driven operation in which ICE has compiled thousands of names of known gang members and associates from state and local law enforcement agencies and run those lists against immigration databases to determine who is in the country illegally or in violation of immigration status.

Over the coming months, ICE will be using all these tools in a combined fashion with the goal of crippling MS-13 organizations across the country. Ultimately, Operation Community Shield will also target other violent street gangs.

For more information on Operation Community Shield, visit us online at www.ice.gov.

-ICE-

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities